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ABSTRACT

The low priority according to children and families in our way of life is reflected in policies and actions at national, state, and local levels. We like to think of America as a child-oriented society but, in fact, our priorities lie more in the pursuit of affluence, and the worship of material things and technology. A broken television set or a broken computer may provoke more indignation and more action than a broken family or a broken child. New national goals should be pursued by many different parts of our society to enhance the quality of life for America's children. Adult-child interaction must be increased on all levels. To benefit children and families, specific recommendations are presented which can be undertaken by private industry and small businesses, the mass media, the community, schools, federal, state and local governments, and individual families. (WY)

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# CHILDREN AND PARENTS: TOGETHER IN THE WORLD

Report of Forum 15

1970 White House Conference on Children

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CURRENT STATUS

America's families and their children are in trouble, trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation. The source of the trouble is nothing less than a national neglect of children and those primarily engaged in their care -- America's parents.

We like to think of America as a child-oriented society, but our actions belie our words. A hard look at our institutions and way of life reveals that our national priorities lie elsewhere. The pursuit of affluence, the worship of material things, the hard sell and the soft, the willingness to accept technology as a substitute for human relationships, the imposition of responsibility without support, and the readiness to blame the victims of evil for the evil itself have brought us to the point where a broken television set or a broken computer provokes more indignation and more action than a broken family or a broken child.

Our national rhetoric notwithstanding, the actual patterns of life in America today are such that children and families come last. Our society expects its citizens first of all to meet the demands of their jobs and then to fulfill civic and social obligations. Responsibilities to children are to be met, of course, but this is something one is expected to do in his spare time. But when, where, and how? In today's world, parents find themselves

at the mercy of a society which imposes pressures and priorities that allow neither time nor place for meaningful activities, and relations between children and adults which downgrade the role of parent and the functions of parenthood, and which prevent the parent from doing the things he wants to do as a guide, friend, and companion to his children.

The frustrations are greatest for the family of poverty where the capacity for human response is crippled by hunger, cold, filth, sickness, and despair. No parent who spends his days in search of menial work, and his nights in keeping rats away from the crib can be expected to find the time -- let alone the heart -- to engage in constructive activities with his children or serve as a stable source of love and discipline.

For families who can get along, the rats are gone, but the rat race remains. The demands of a job, or often two jobs, claim mealtimes, evenings, and week-ends as well as days; the trips and moves necessary to get ahead or simply hold one's own; the ever increasing time spent in commuting, parties, evenings out, social and community obligations -- all the things one has to do to meet so-called primary responsibilities -- produce a situation in which a child often spends more time with a passive babysitter than a participating parent.

And even when the parent is at home, a compelling force cuts off communication and response among the family members. Although

television could, if used creatively, enrich the activities of children and families, it now only undermines them. Like the sorcerer of old, the television set casts its magic spell, freezing speech and action and turning the living into silent statues so long as the enchantment lasts. The primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behavior it produces as the behavior it prevents -- the talks, the games, the family festivities and arguments through which much of the child's learning takes place and his character is formed. Turning on the television set can turn off the process that transforms children into people.

In our modern way of life, children are deprived not only of parents but of people in general. A host of factors conspire to isolate children from the rest of society. The fragmentation of the extended family, the separation of residential and business areas, the disappearance of neighborhoods, zoning ordinances, occupational mobility, child labor laws, the abolishment of the apprentice system, consolidated schools, television, separate patterns of social life for different age groups, the working mother, the delegation of child care to specialists -- all these manifestations of progress operate to decrease opportunity and incentive for meaningful contact between children and persons older, or younger, than themselves.

And here we confront a fundamental and disturbing fact: <u>children need people in order to become human</u>. The fact is fundamental

because it is firmly grounded both in scientific research and in human experience. It is disturbing because the isolation of children from adults simultaneously threatens the growth of the individual and the survival of the society. The young cannot pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. It is primarily through observing, playing, and working with others older and younger than himself that a child discovers both what he can do and who he can become -- that he develops both his ability and his identity. It is primarily through exposure and interaction with adults and children of different ages that a child acquires new interests and skills and learns the meaning of tolerance, cooperation, and compassion. Hence to relegate children to a world of their own is to deprive them of their humanity.

Yet, this is what is happening in America today. <u>We are experiencing a breakdown in the process of making human beings human</u>. By isolating our children from the rest of society, we abandon them to a world devoid of adults and ruled by the destructive impulses and compelling pressures both of the age-segregated peer group and the aggressive and exploitive television screen. By setting our priorities elsewhere and putting children and families last, by claiming one set of values while pursuing another, we leave our children bereft of standards and support and our own lives impoverished and corrupted.

This reversal of priorities, which amounts to a betrayal of our children, underlies the growing disillusionment and alienation

among young people in all segments of American society. Those who grew up in settings where children and families still counted are able to react to their frustration in positive ways -- through constructive protest, participation, and public service. Those who come from circumstances in which the family could not function, be it in slum or suburb, can only strike out against an environment they have experienced as indifferent, callous, cruel, and unresponsive. We do not condone the destruction and violence manifested by young people in widely disparate sections of our society; we merely point to the roots of a process which, if not reversed, will continue to spread. The failure to reorder our priorities, the insistence on business as usual, and the continued reliance on rhetoric as a substitute for fundamental reforms can only have one result: the far more rapid and pervasive growth of alienation, apathy, drugs, delinquency, and violence among the young and not so young in all segments of our national life. We face the prospect of a society which resents its own children and fears its youth. Surely this is a road to national destruction.

This is not the road for America. Our society still has the capacity and the value commitment necessary to reverse the trend. What is needed is a change in our patterns of living which will once again bring people back into the lives of children and children back into the lives of people.

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GOALS

Forum 15 proposes a series of measures to accomplish these ends. The measures can be undertaken by many different parts of our society, including private industry and small businesses, the mass media, the community, schools, federal, state, and local government, and individual families. The recommendations serve five major objectives:

1. To enhance the status of families and children in all phases of American life.

2. To increase opportunities for parents, other adults, and older children to engage in meaningful activities with the young at home, in the neighborhood, in pre-school settings, in schools, and in the community at large.

3. To enhance the power of parents to choose and influence the kinds of environments in which their children are growing up, including neighborhoods, preschools, health and welfare services, schools, television programs, and recreational facilities.

4. To provide children with opportunities to accept challenging responsibilities in work and service in school, neighborhood, and community.

5. To grant children, especially teenagers, a greater measure of influence and control over activities and programs that affect them in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

We believe that the pursuit of these objectives will not only enhance the quality of life for America's children, but will assist our people, in a perilous period in their history, to rediscover their moral identity as a society and as a nation.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER: INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, AND GOVERNMENT

More than any other institution in our society, it is American business and industry that has the opportunity of determining the fate of the American family and the American child. More than any other institution, they have the power to reverse the present trend and to place families and children at the center rather than the periphery of our national life. They can do so by:

- recognizing the full measure of their responsibility for the way in which families are forced to live;
- changing the organization and demands of work in such a way as to make it possible for children and parents to live and learn together;
- actively providing opportunities, resources, and facilities that will increase the involvement of parents and all employees in the lives of children in the community;
- developing ways for children and youth to engage in meaningful activities in the world of adults.

Specifically, we make the following recommendations:

1. Commission for Children and Families. At both the central and the local level, every industry, business, and branch of the government should institute a Commission for Children and Families charged initially with the task of examining the impact of the present policies and practices of the organization on the lives of families. A primary source of information should be the family members themselves, including children of high school and elementary school ages. The

necessary information can be gathered and properly evaluated only if all parties directly participate in a continuing process as equals. To make this possible, the commission must be composed of members selected by each of the major groups concerned, including management, labor, parents, and children themselves. Based on ongoing evaluations, the commission should make concrete recommendations and implement changes in existing policies and practices designed to strengthen the integrity of the family.

2. Adoption of Groups of Children. The need "to bring people back into the lives of children and children back into the lives of people" is especially relevant for business and industry. Although for many years business and industrial organizations have engaged in activities involving children (for example, plant tours, Junior Achievement Programs, and public service by employees), most of these programs do not lead to continuing relationships between children and adults. As an example of an innovation which can add an entirely new dimension to the involvement of adults with children, we strongly recommend that all business firms and their subdivisions consider "adopting" groups of children; for example, a department could adopt a school classroom, day care facility, Head Start program, or scout troop. Employees would invite the children to visit them at their work, so that children would learn not only about specific jobs, but also about the people who do them. In return, the employees

would come to know the children on a different basis, by taking an active interest in the day-to-day activities of "their" children. We are not suggesting that organizations employ or exploit children in any way, but rather that, as a matter of civic responsibility, business and industrial firms should experiment with new ways of establishing close and continuing relationships with children in their communities.

3. Flexible Work Schedules. Business and industrial organizations and government agencies should establish flexible work schedules so that both male and female employees can be with children when they are most needed as when children get home from school or when they are sick.

4. Minimizing Out-of-town, Weekend, and Evening Obligations. A parent who cannot be at home when his children are, no matter how excellent he may be in other respects, cannot fulfill his role as a parent. And the organization that keeps him away is undermining the welfare of his children. The introduction of a family-oriented personnel policy which minimizes such obligations would not only counteract these effects but -- if offered as a fringe benefit -- would help attract and hold more able personnel, for the most capable and responsible staff are also likely to be those who care most about their families.

5. Family-oriented Social and Recreational Programs. Many of the social and recreational activities sponsored or expected by business organizations have the effect of separating parents from their children, by taking the parents out of the home precisely at the times when children are there. An emphasis on family-oriented programs in which persons of all ages could participate would help to reinforce, rather than undermine, active concern of parents and society at large, for children and youth.

6. Reducing Geographic Moves. The policy followed by some large organizations of transferring personnel every few years from one city or region to another is highly disruptive to family life. The impact is hardest on children, since healthy psychological development requires some degree of stability and continuity in the social environment from childhood through adolescence. A pattern of life which repeatedly tears the child away from familiar friends, schools, and neighborhoods increases the likelihood of the child's alienation both inside and outside the family. Accordingly, moves should be kept to a minimum.

7. Increasing Number and Status of Part-time Positions. We recommend that business and industrial organizations and government agencies increase the number and status of part-time positions so that employees who wish to give a larger part of their time and energy to parenthood or other activities with children can do so without sacrificing their

career opportunities and rate of income. Whenever possible, business and industrial organizations are encouraged to be creative in developing home-based, part-time employment opportunities.

8. Leave and Rest Privileges for Maternal and Child Care. Business and industrial organizations share with other institutions in society responsibility for the birth of a healthy child. In view of the cost to society of welfare and institutionalization of children born with prenatal damage, these organizations have the obligation to develop policies of leave and rest for mothers during pregnancy and early months of infant care without jeopardy to their employment or income status.

9. Day Care Facilities. To increase opportunities for parents and other employees to spend time with their children, day care facilities should be established within or near the place of work, but with completely independent administrative arrangements which allow parents a determining voice in the planning and execution of the program. Parents and other employees should be encouraged to visit the day care facility during the lunch hour or coffee breaks and to participate in activities with the children.

10. Apprenticeship Opportunities. We recommend that employers develop plans and procedures for providing supervised

apprenticeship opportunities for children and youth not for just specific vocational training but as a means of introducing them to activities in the world of adults. (See related paragraphs concerning cooperation with schools in RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL, and liability coverage in RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY.)

11. Concern for Children and Families in Advertising and Public Relations. An attitude of social responsibility on the part of an employer should extend to his taking a strong position on the values and priorities which are communicated in his own advertising and public relations programs. Above all, children and families should not be exploited for commercial purposes. In addition, business and industrial organizations should take an active role in the sponsorship of public service advertising designed specifically to enhance the status of families and children in American life. (See RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MASS MEDIA AND THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY.)

12. Family-oriented Industrial Planning and Development. To an ever increasing degree, business establishments determine not only where and how employees work, but also where and how their families live. Decisions on plant and office location have substantial influence upon the kind of housing, schools, and neighborhoods that become available to employees and their children. Indeed, more and more large organizations are becoming involved in planning and building housing

projects and even the entire community in which their employees live. Such plans should give explicit consideration to factors which influence the course of family life, specifically those which provide or preclude opportunity for active participation of parents and other adults in the life of children and vice versa. This includes such issues as commuting, traffic safety, location of shops and businesses where children could have contact with adults at work, recreational and day care facilities readily accessible to parents as well as children, provision for a neighborhood family center, and other family-oriented facilities and services described in this report (especially RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY; SCHOOLS; and GOVERNMENT).

Although these recommendations are primarily designed to benefit children and families, experienced managers and labor leaders will also recognize them as good business. For example, contrary to commonly held views, studies of part-time workers in several occupations and industries reveal a gain rather than a loss of quality and quantity of production. Similarly, implementation of these recommendations can be expected to counteract two of the most serious and growing problems in the nation's economy -- high rates of turnover and absenteeism.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MASS MEDIA AND THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

American children and adults spend an average of twenty-seven hours a week watching television.[1] In addition, they spend considerable amounts of time reading newspapers and magazines and listening to radio. There are disagreements as to the precise effects of television on the lives of those who watch it, but there is no doubt as to its enormous influence. The mass media must therefore bear a heavy burden of responsibility for the well-being of our society. Indeed, the media recognize this in their code of ethics, but their current practices contribute significantly to the undermining of the American family. Watching television is an individual activity requiring no interaction with others. Therefore, as television viewing rises, communication within the family tends to decrease. A radical new concept of television is required, one that both in content and in style recognizes the importance of the family and encourages interaction among family members

1. <u>"Interactive" Television</u>. Urgent attention should be paid to the creation of an entirely new kind of television programming, one which no longer casts the viewer in the role of passive and isolated bystander but instead involves family members in activities with each other in games, conversation, and joint creative activity. There is nothing inherent in

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1 Nielsen TV Index, Winter 1970.

television technology which precludes this possibility.

2. Public Service Advertising. Leaders of the advertising industry should join with representatives of the mass media to develop and give wide exposure to a nationwide advertising campaign designed to enhance the status of children and parents in American life, to provide concrete examples of family-oriented activities and programs, and to show how such activities can be fun for both children and their parents.

3. Elimination of the Exploitation of Children and Families in Advertising. One of the most destructive manifestations of the low priority accorded children and families in American society is the way in which advertisements in the mass media exploit the child and his family for commercial purposes. For example, a child is shown urging his mother to buy a particular product. It is the direct responsibility of the mass media and their clients to identify and eliminate this practice wherever it occurs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY: A WORLD FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The power of the family to function effectively depends in large measure on the support to family life provided by the local community. The following recommendations are designed to insure and increase such support.

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1. Commission for Children and Families. We recommend that every community or local area establish a commission on children and families which will have as its initial charge finding out what the community is or is not doing for its children and their families. The commission would examine the adequacy of existing programs such as maternal and child health services, day care facilities, and recreational opportunities. It would also investigate what places and people are available to children when they are not in school, what opportunities they have for play, challenging activity, or useful work, and to whom they can turn for guidance or assistance. The commission would also assess the existing and needed resources in the community that provide families with positive learning, living and leisure opportunities that lend themselves to pleasant, stimulating, human experiences for the members of families to enjoy together. The commission would raise the questions: How do families spend their leisure time? Can the community sponsor events and projects that are within the means of every family in the community? Could these experiences add to the positive identification of an individual as a valued family member and as an important community member?

To accomplish its task, the commission will need to include representatives of the major community institutions concerned with children and families, such as schools, churches, welfare

services, as well as businessmen, parents from different segments of the community, and, especially, teenagers and older children who can speak from direct experience. The commission would be expected to report its findings and recommendations to appropriate executive bodies and to the public at large through the mass media. After completing the initial assessment phase, the commission would assume continuing responsibility for developing and monitoring programs to implement its recommendations. Proceeding on the assumption that a child's basic satisfactions come from a stable and positive family life, this commission would concern itself with proposing programs to strengthen family life by making childhood and parenthood a time all want to remember.

2. Participation of Youth in Policy Bodies. Young people become responsible by being given and held accountable for responsibilities that really matter to them. In keeping with this principle, every community organization that has jurisdiction over activities affecting children and youth should include some teenagers, older children, and parents as voting members as well as representatives of school boards, welfare commissions, recreation commissions, and hospital boards.

3. Neighborhood Family Centers. Families are strengthened through association with each other in common activities and responsibilities. For this to occur, there must be places where families can meet to work and play together. The

neighborhood family center is such a place. Located in a school, church, or other community building, it provides a focal point for leisure, learning, and community problem-solving to all family members. The center offers facilities for games and creative activities for persons of all ages including space for those who merely prefer to "watch the fun." By emphasizing cross-age rather than age-segregated activities, the center differs from the traditional community center. These cross-age activities must also be supported in other ways through recreation facilities and programs, such as family camps, fairs, games, and picnics.

The center can also eliminate community fragmentation of services by acting as the local "one-door" entry point where families can obtain health care, child care, legal aid, and welfare.

4. Community and Neighborhood Projects. The community, as a family to the families within it, must provide activities which enable different generations to have contact and become a significant part of each other's lives. Through community sponsored projects, individuals of all ages can grow in their appreciation of each other as they learn to give to one another through a sharing of their talents and skills. The growing interest in ecology -- cleaning up the environment -- provides an excellent focus for such common

endeavors, since it requires a variety of knowledge, skills, and services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL

The school plays a central role in the lives of children and their parents in American society. As a result, it is in a position to do much either to enhance or to weaken relationships between children and adults. With few exceptions, schools, as they are organized and operated today, increase the separation of children from their parents and other adults in the community. The school does this by isolating children in age-graded groups under the supervision of teachers who are enmeshed in regulations that prevent them from acting effectively as intermediaries between pupils and the community in which the school exists. The result is to intensify the alienation of young people, not only from the school, but from adult society at large.

The following recommendations are based on the fundamental premise that children cannot learn about the adult world, nor adults about children, unless they interact with each other. Our recommendations are aimed at helping the school to take fullest advantage of its considerable opportunities to build bridges between children and adults.

1. Connecting School with Community. The school and, more specifically, teachers should assume central responsibility

for establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships between children and adults in all walks of life. This will involve:

- extending the physical and psychological boundaries of the school to include the community at large,
- radically altering current conceptions of school curricula to incorporate and acknowledge the educational value of continuing interactions between children and adults involved in a variety of occupational and social roles.

Central to this recommendation is the principle that teachers be encouraged to serve as links between the children and persons and activities in the surrounding community. Teachers can do this in the following ways:

- By making arrangements for children to spend time, during the school day, outside of school under the supervision of other adults engaged in a variety of occupational and social roles. These contacts and experiences must provide an opportunity for children to engage in interaction with adults over time. A simple example would be the "adoption" of an entire class by a police precinct, local industrial firm, or other adult organization (see Adoption of Groups of Children in RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER). Children would visit regularly for prolonged periods of time, usually without their teacher, thereby widening their

knowledge of adults beyond family and school. In the course of these associations, learning by both the children and their adult sponsors would take place. By making arrangements for adults in the community to participate actively in the school's instructional program. The purpose of such participation must be different from the occasional vocational counseling programs currently conducted by schools using outside personnel. The primary objective would be to acquaint pupils with adults in their roles as productive members of society. To give a fuller picture of what human beings can become, participants should be selected not only to reflect a variety of occupations but also civic responsibilities and avocations, such as hobbies and artistic skills. In addition, persons possessing subject matter skills -- writing, languages, mathematics, or science -- should be encouraged to assist in supervising special projects, tutoring, and grading both in and out of school.

2. <u>Role of Parents and Children in Developing School Policies and Curricula</u>. American schools are a public institution. In keeping with the objective of enabling family members to have a strong voice in determining the programs affecting the lives of their children, schools should develop mechanisms for actively involving both parents and children in formulating policies and curricula responsive to the values, aspirations

and cultural backgrounds of the families to whom the school is ultimately responsible.

3. Changing Educational Requirements. School boards, state boards of education, and other responsible bodies must revise existing regulations and curriculum requirements to permit schools and teachers in schools to make these new kinds of educational experiences available to children. In addition, questions of legal responsibility, including liability for injury and the provision of insurance coverage for outside groups, must be resolved through appropriate federal and state legislation (see RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY).

4. Involvement of Children in Challenging Responsibilities. America has been referred to as a society characterized by the "inutility of children." Our children are not entrusted with any real responsibilities in their family, neighborhood, or community. Little that they do really matters. When they do participate, it is in some inconsequential undertaking. They are given duties rather than responsibilities; that is, the ends and means have been determined by someone else, and their job is to fulfill an assignment involving little judgment, decision-making, or risk. The latter remain within the purview of supervising adults. Although this policy serves the interest of children by protecting them from burdens beyond their years, evidence suggests that it has been carried too far in

our contemporary society and has contributed to the alienation and alleged incapacity of young people to deal constructively with personal and social problems. Children acquire the capacity to cope with difficult social situations when they have been given opportunities to take on consequential responsibilities and are held accountable for them. We recommend that the school provide children with such opportunities (as distinguished from "duties") in both the school and, especially, in the surrounding community. The children should have an active part in defining what the problems are in their school and their community and what their responsibility is or should become in contributing to their solution. Within the school, this implies greater involvement of children in formulating and enforcing codes of behavior and in planning and developing activities in the classroom. This should insure that the burden of maintaining discipline does not fall solely, or even primarily, on the shoulders of the teacher, who is then freed to perform her primary function of expanding the children's horizon and range of competence. Outside the school, the pupils should take on projects, both as individuals and groups, dealing with concrete problems which they themselves have identified -- for example, "cleaning up the environment" or other service projects. Particularly important are activities involving care and responsibility for younger children (as discussed in the succeeding recommendation).

5. Functional Education for Parenthood. At the present time, American schools give only minimal attention to the one sphere of activity which almost all their graduates will share as adults -- parenthood. Where parent education does occur, it is typically presented in vicarious forms, through reading and discussion, or, at best, role playing rather than actual role taking. The best preparation for parenthood that can be given to school-age children is direct experience, under appropriate supervision, in caring for, and working with, those younger than themselves. From the elementary grades onward, children should be given the opportunity (but not the "duty") to engage in these activities. For example, an entire class might be invited to "adopt" a kindergarten, day care group, or Head Start center as a means of becoming acquainted with the children, playing with them, teaching them games, helping escort them on outings or to and from their homes, and getting to know their parents. For older children, the activities would be extended to include helping with subject matter skills, supervising special projects, and providing guidance and leadership in recreational and civic activities.

6. Attachment of Preschool Programs to Schools. To implement these recommendations, we recommend that Head Start centers, day care facilities, and other programs for young children be located in or near schools, be integrated with the school

curriculum, and serve as laboratories in which young people and adults alike can learn about children and experience the rewards of seeing and contributing to their development. This objective will be defeated if the schools impose their current philosophy and mode of operation on preschool programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

The low priority accorded to children and families in our way of life is reflected in government policy and action at national, state, and local levels. We have only to look at the federal budget to see that our national priorities lie elsewhere. The newly established Office of Child Development, the symbol of a new federal commitment to the needs of children and to the provision and coordination of services for them, was voted this year a House appropriation of $3.5 million -- less than the cost of a single military plane or the smallest space module. Head Start, the national program that has given great hope to the millions of American parents who live in poverty, is not being expanded. Instead, it is being cut down and condemned in the face of budget ceilings, inflation, and the imposition of a false criterion of success -- the I.Q. score. Although the Office of Child Development was established with the express purpose of combining federal programs serving children and their families, in point of fact the very opposite has occurred. Legislation already on the books providing needed services for children and families has been negated

by crippling appropriation cuts. As staffs are reduced across the country, those who remain find their capacity to render needed service seriously impaired and their morale lowered by having to take over additional responsibilities.

The same confusion, concession to competing pressures, and discrepancy between rhetoric and reality reappears at the level of every state, county, and city in the land. What we lack is not the resources but the will to make our government reflect the basic needs and aspirations we all share as family members. To give expression to these common values, we propose a series of recommendations to government addressed to the President, the Congress, and the Governors and Legislatures of each state.

1. We respectfully request the President of the United States to use the power and prestige of his office to establish concern for children and families as a national priority. The White House Conference on Children provides an appropriate occasion for a Presidential statement and action along the following lines:

   - Increase the budget and authority of the Office of Child Development so that it can fulfill its objective, as stated by the President, of providing "a comprehensive approach to the development of young children combining programs which deal with the physical, social, and intellectual."

- Urge the Congress to allocate the maximum possible budget to those federal programs, such as Head Start and the Parent and Child Centers, which now contribute the most to strengthening children and families in line with existing knowledge about what is necessary for healthy development.

2. We urge the President and the Congress to support and expedite legislation now pending that provides and extends additional child development service to the nation's families. Attention should be focused on those bills which recognize the following requirements for the development of America's children and families:

- Comprehensive care including health services, nutrition, cognitive development, and social services.
- Programs both at the preschool and school-age level which exploit every possible opportunity for enhancing the amount and, especially, the quality of family interaction with children both in the center setting and in the home.
- Programs which ensure parents a decisive policy role in the planning, operation, and evaluation of activities conducted in behalf of their children.
- Provision for the involvement of older children in activities with the very young.
- Programs which maximize the involvement of all segments of the community in concern for children and families.

- Radical revision of current welfare legislation to eliminate discrimination against the presence of male adults in the home, unmarried mothers, or those who prefer to stay home with their children, or to work only part-time.

3. We call upon the Congress and the Governors and Legislatures of the states to institute the following measures in behalf of children and families:
   - Reexamine and revise child labor laws to eliminate unnecessary restrictions that now preclude the development of programs enabling children to become acquainted with the world of work and to participate in informal apprenticeship experiences.
   - Provide low cost insurance to cover liability of employers who wish to develop programs for acquainting children with the world of work.
   - Reexamine and revise licensing requirements for children's institutions and programs to remove barriers and enhance the participation of parents and paraprofessionals in the program.
   - Draft and pass a Fair Part-time Employment Practices Act which will prohibit discrimination in job opportunity, income, or status for persons with family responsibilities during part-time employment.

4. We call upon the Governors and Legislatures of the states to follow the precedent already set by several states in establishing a Governor's Council or State Commission on Children and Families to assess existing needs and services and make recommendations on how the states can best complement services provided at federal and local levels.

FAMILIES FIRST

Forum 15 has few recommendations for families and children themselves. Given sun, soil, air, and water, a plant does not need to be told how to grow. If America's parents are given the place, power, and prestige to enable them to function as guides, companions, and sources of love and discipline for their children, and to have a decisive role in determining the environments and programs in which their children live and grow, the great majority of them will be able to take full advantage of the opportunity to enhance the quality of life both for their children and themselves. Only one caution must be borne in mind. The crucial factor is not how much time is spent with the child but how the time is spent. A child learns, he becomes human, primarily through participation in a challenging activity with those he loves and admires. It is the example, challenge, and reinforcement provided by people who care that enable a child to develop both his ability and his identity. An everyday example of the operation of this principle is the mother who daily talks with her young child and -- usually without thinking much about it -- responds more warmly

when he uses new words and expressions and gradually introduces new and more complex forms which the child in turn adopts. It is in work and play with children, in games, in projects, in shared responsibilities with parents, adults, and older children that the child develops the skills, motives, and qualities of character that enable him to live a life that is gratifying both to himself and those around him. But this can only happen in a society that lets and makes it happen, one in which the needs of families and children become a primary concern not merely of special organizations and interest groups but of all major social institutions -- government, industry, business, mass media, communities, neighborhoods, and individual citizens. It is the priorities they set that will determine our children's present and America's future.

And the last shall be first.

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